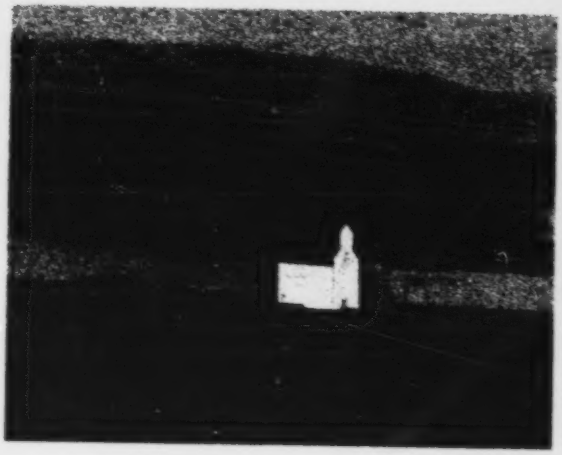
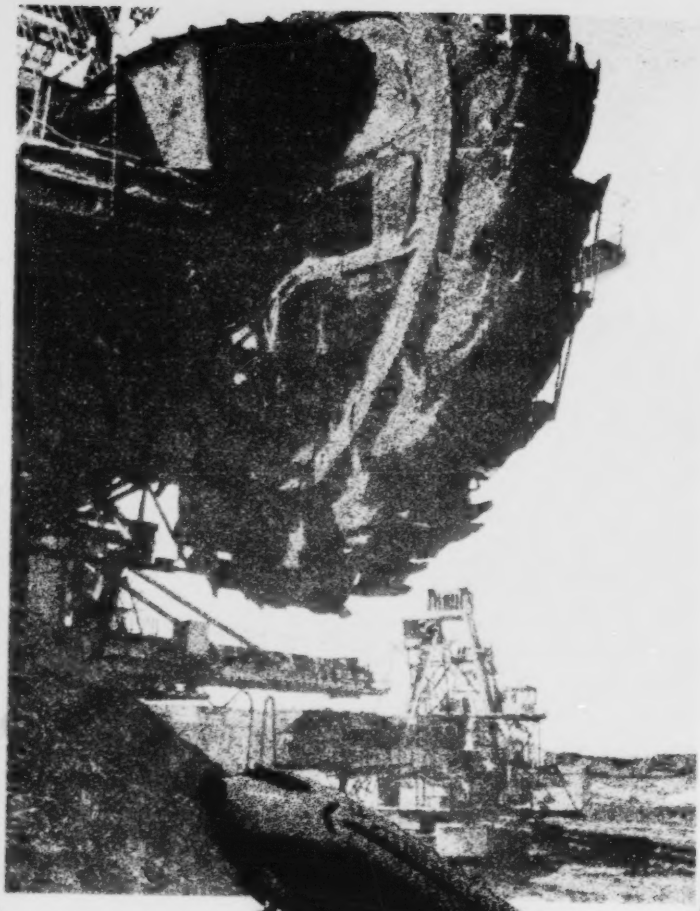




ANNUAL REPORT
1985/86

Alberta
NORTHERN ALBERTA
DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

86-04413/

LETTERS OF TRANSMITTAL

Alberta
NORTHERN ALBERTA
DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

2nd Floor, Provincial Building, 9621 - 96 Avenue, Postal Bag 900-14, Peace River, Alberta, Canada T0H 2X0 403/624-6274

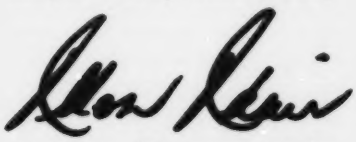
April 15, 1986

To Her Honor
Helen Hunley
Lieutenant-Governor of the
Province of Alberta

Madam:

The undersigned has the honor to transmit herewith, the Twenty-second Annual Report of the Northern Alberta Development Council.

Respectfully submitted,



J. Allen "Boomer" Adair
Minister Responsible for the
Northern Alberta Development Council

Alberta
NORTHERN ALBERTA
DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

2nd Floor, Provincial Building, 9621 - 96 Avenue, Postal Bag 900-14, Peace River, Alberta, Canada T0H 2X0 403/624-6274

April 15, 1986

Hon. J. A. "Boomer" Adair
Minister Responsible for the
Northern Alberta Development Council

Sir:

The undersigned has the honor to transmit herewith, the Twenty-second Annual Report of the Northern Alberta Development Council.

Respectfully submitted,

Norm A. Weiss, MLA
Chairman

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STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRMAN

Norm Weiss, MLA
Chairman,
Northern Alberta Development Council

In 1985/86, the Northern Alberta Development Council largely completed its three year concentration on a number of important northern economic development priority areas. Projects completed in previous years include the position paper on "Development of New Agricultural Land in Northwestern Alberta", the brief to the White Paper Hearings, the Tourism North Conference, and the Employment Alternatives Workshop.

During the current year the initiatives were Council sponsorship of two highly successful conferences. A Seminar on "Utilization of Hardwoods in Northern Alberta" was held in April, 1985, in Whitecourt to examine a major research report and strategy review. In October, 300 delegates gathered for the Council-sponsored Challenge North Conference. The theme of the Conference was "the future for economic growth in northern Alberta".

A highlight of the Challenge North Conference involved the signing of a new Canada/Alberta Northern Development Agreement which the Northern Alberta Development Council has been advocating for some time.

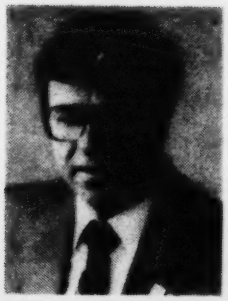
Leading up to the Challenge North Conference, a major review of economic opportunities in the North was undertaken. This printed report plus a high quality pictorial/data profile of the North, "Northern Alberta Today", provided the Conference delegates with valuable base information for their discussions. Other major publications undertaken in the fiscal year were a "Career Opportunities in Northern Alberta" brochure and an update of the important "Inventory of Infrastructure for Northern Communities, 1985".

Apart from the two major conferences and a special "Oil Sands Information Exchange" held in Fort McMurray in June, 1985, the Council held six public meetings in Wanham, Fort McKay, Glendon, Paddle Prairie, Blue Ridge and Boyle. One hundred and eighty-nine briefs were presented and followed up in detail by the Council.

At the end of the year, three new Council members were appointed to help carry on the important "grass roots" advisory role of the Northern Alberta Development Council.

NORTHERN ALBERTA DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

NORTHERN ALBERTA DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL 1985/86



NORM WEISS, MLA
CHAIRMAN
FT. McMURRAY

HON. AL "BOOMER" ADAIR
MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR
NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT
PEACE RIVER

JOE MOLHO
VICE-CHAIRMAN
SWAN HILLS

MARY BENNETT
ELK POINT

GENE DEXTRASE
HIGH LEVEL

BETTY DUCKETT
GRAND CENTRE

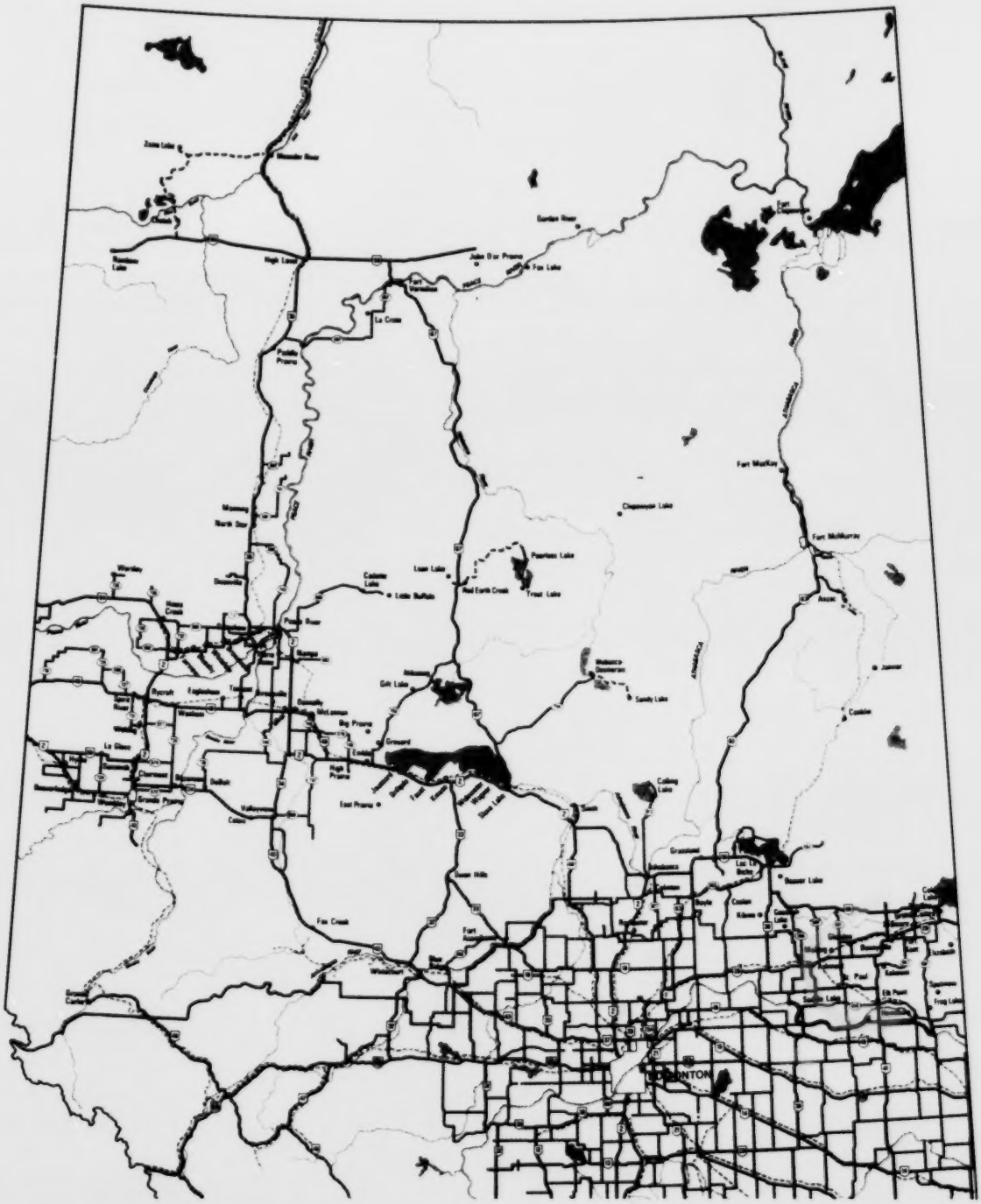
BOB ELLIOTT, MLA
BEAVERLODGE

ERNEST HOWSE
CASLAN

CEC JARDINE
VALLEYVIEW

VINCE RICE
KINUSO

TED SONNTAG
HOTCHKISS



NORTHERN ALBERTA DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL AREA

(COMMUNITIES WITH POPULATION OVER 75: 1986 CANADA CENSUS)

PRIMARY HIGHWAY — SECONDARY ROAD - - - - - L.O.C. ROAD ..... RAILWAY

PRODUCED BY THE ALBERTA BUREAU OF SURVEYING AND MAPPING © 1986

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

The Northern Alberta Development Council was initially created in 1963 as a five-member advisory body to the provincial government. It was enlarged in 1973 to a membership of 10, and currently consists of eight private citizens appointed on the basis of public nomination, and two elected Members of the Legislative Assembly.

Through its own Act, the Northern Alberta Development Council is charged with the responsibility to "investigate, monitor, evaluate, plan and promote practical measures to foster and advance general development in northern Alberta, and to advise the government thereon." The Act makes specific reference to social and economic development, the development of communities and service delivery, and the development of government services and programs.

The Council, at present, has a full-time MLA Chairman and reports to the Executive Council through the Minister of Tourism and Small Business, responsible for Northern Development.

The Council's primary role is to provide government with a northern point of view on a wide range of issues, supplementing and complementing the perspectives of northern MLAs. A major objective of Council since 1973 has been to increase the amount of public participation in the planning and design of delivery systems for various government services in northern Alberta.

The general purposes that Council wishes to promote are:

- to enhance economic and educational opportunities within northern Alberta in order to encourage young people to stay;
- to enhance the viability of traditional northern small town and rural life;
- to support the desires and aspirations of all residents in northern Alberta for a fair share in the wealth and potential of the area;
- to support the desires of various cultural and ethnic groups within northern Alberta for maintenance of their distinctive heritage.

Through regularly scheduled public meetings and sponsorship of major conferences and seminars, the Council serves as a forum to which residents can express their ideas and concerns regarding development of the North. In addition to receiving briefs at public

meetings, the Council can initiate research into particular opportunities or needs, and often pursues, on behalf of northern residents, efforts toward the development of new programs or co-ordination of the existing service delivery.

The information service provided through the response to briefs received from the public results in the initiation of most Council activities. Nearly 60 per cent of the briefs presented to the Northern Alberta Development Council since 1973 have resulted in positive responses.

Issues considered by the Northern Alberta Development Council during the year under review were many, including regional economic development, aspen utilization, agriculture, business development, trapping, resource development impacts, water resources, drainage, tourism, education, infrastructure systems, health services, senior citizen needs, professional manpower requirements, mortgage funding and local government concerns.

In April of 1985, the Council sponsored a major Hardwood Utilization Seminar in Whitecourt. One hundred industry, community and government representatives reviewed a major Council research review document and a number of recommendations were forwarded to the Provincial Cabinet. In conjunction with the Fort McKay public meeting in June, a significant Information Exchange meeting was convened in Fort McMurray involving the ERCB, AOSTRA, nine oil and gas companies operating in the region and numerous community groups and organizations. A major economic review conference, Challenge North, was held October 2 - 4, 1985, in Fort McMurray. A highlight of the Conference was the signing of the new Canada/Alberta Northern Development Subsidiary Agreement.

The Northern Alberta Development Council serves as a facilitator and catalyst, assisting the line departments of government responsible for the implementation of changes and service improvements. The Council's public participation role over the years has provided an enhanced two-way flow of information, resulting in marked improvements for all northern Albertans.

NORTHERN ALBERTA DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

PUBLIC MEETINGS

During 1985/86, the Northern Alberta Development Council held six public meetings: at Wanham in April, Fort McKay in June, Glendon in August, Paddle Prairie in September, Blue Ridge in January and Boyle in February. Four other regular monthly meetings were held in Peace River along with a conference, a seminar, a trip to Tumbler Ridge, B.C. and a number of special activities.

One hundred and eighty-nine briefs were received from groups and individuals in attendance at the public meetings. Each brief submitted was reviewed by the Council to determine a course of action and forwarded to various departments and agencies of government for consideration and comment. The departmental responses were then discussed by the Council, and a decision made as to whether or not the department's position and/or proposed action was appropriate. If the departmental response was felt to be inappropriate, the Council directed the Northern Development Branch to further clarify the issue through Branch-directed research, or to undertake discussions with the responsible officials in order to achieve the necessary action. At times, co-ordination of the efforts of a number of departments of government was required. Brief originators were advised of the progress made on each of the ideas or concerns expressed in their submissions.

The results achieved by the Council varied greatly from brief to brief. In several instances the concerns raised were either totally or partially resolved. In some cases, the Council and Branch are continuing to work toward a practical solution which is acceptable to all involved. The current status of any of the briefs submitted to Council is available from the Northern Development Branch in Peace River.

BRIEFS

During the year 26 briefs were received from Fort Chipewyan, Fort McKay and Fort McMurray in the northeast region; 25 from Desmarais, Faust, Grouard, High Prairie, Slave Lake, Sandy Lake, Chipewyan Lake, Blue Ridge, Fort Assiniboine, Widewater, Swan Hills and Whitecourt in the central region; 57 from Athabasca, Bonnyville, Caslan, Cold Lake, Elk Point, Grand Centre, Lac La Biche, Glendon, St. Lina, Boyle, Plamondon and St. Paul in the southeast region; 47 from Fairview, High Level, La Crete, Manning, Worsley, Keg River Fort Vermilion, Deadwood, Cleardale, Brownvale and Peace River in the northwest region; 21 from Clairmont, Beaverlodge, Grande Prairie, McLennan, Tangent, Rycroft, Falher, Eaglesham, Spirit River and Grande Cache in the southwest region; and 13 from Edmonton and other points outside the Northern Alberta Development Council boundary.

RESEARCH AND CO-ORDINATION

Many of the issues brought to the attention of the Northern Alberta Development Council required intensive background work and follow-up activities. As a result, the Council initiated a number of research projects and efforts directed at co-ordination or modification of the delivery of government services in various areas.

Major Council activities in 1985/86 included:

- submission of a recommendations paper to various Ministers regarding planning and funding issues related to Drainage and Erosion Control in Northwestern Alberta

- an orientation tour of the new Tumbler Ridge, B.C., planned townsite and discussions with local town council and chamber of commerce officials and representatives of Quintette Coal Ltd.

- presentation of briefs to the Minister of Agriculture regarding severe drought conditions in parts of northern Alberta

- an information exchange and discussion meeting with the Chairman and members of the Alberta Water Resources Commission

- submission of a brief by the Chairman to the Canadian Transport Commission hearings regarding continuation of rail service from Lac La Biche to Fort McMurray

- a meeting with the Deputy Minister of Municipal Affairs regarding a number of municipal and local government issues raised in public briefs

- participation in an orientation workshop in La Ronge for the members of the newly constituted Saskatchewan Northern Development Advisory Council, modelled on the Northern Alberta Development Council

- a tour of the medium density fibreboard expansion at Blue Ridge Lumber

- a tour of Athabasca University facilities and program review

- submission of a detailed reaction document regarding the proposed Native Education Policy Statement

- preparation of a requested briefing document for the Premier

- co-ordination of Fort McKay oil company/local community discussion meetings in Fort McKay

- initiation of a major review on telecommunications needs in northern Alberta

- initiation of preparatory work for a booklet on accessing employment in the energy sector of northern Alberta

- initiation of a research project on Hail and Crop Insurance in preparation for a submission to the proposed government hearing process

- completion of a substantive mortgage insurance review

- presentation of a requested paper at an international community impact symposium in St. John's, Newfoundland

- support for community assessment projects involving Grande Cache correctional centre, Valleyview social needs, CFS Beaverlodge, Elk Point roads, Zama health services

- continuing support for a major senior citizens' research project in the northwest region and an economic indicator survey at Beaverlodge

- support for the Fort McMurray Crisis Centre, Fort McKay social needs, Wabasca natural gas, Fairview Seniors Conference and Anzac television community projects

- participation in developing a Tourism School Curriculum Project with Game Country Tourist Zone, Travel Alberta and Alberta Education

- continuation of a three-year travel allowance program to attract medical students to the north for their elective courses

- completion of major background analysis and co-ordination activities involving community growth, trappers' compensation, aspen utilization, vocational training, health service needs and remote community economic development

- input to a number of interdepartmental committees in such areas as transportation, water and sewer delivery, native employment programming, resource development, housing, tourism, agricultural research, local government and infrastructure provision in northern communities.

UTILIZATION OF HARDWOODS IN NORTHERN ALBERTA

For many years northern Alberta's extensive hardwood resource has been recognized as having considerable potential for development. There are more than five million hectares of pure or predominantly pure hardwood stands in northern Alberta forests. Although current harvest levels are higher than a few decades ago, extensive tracts of hardwood are under-utilized.

This resource, which consists predominantly of trembling aspen but includes balsam poplar and white birch, remains untapped primarily because of historical reliance upon softwoods and the inherent defects in the resource. A substantial amount of work has been done in Alberta and elsewhere to eliminate these disadvantages government-sponsored resource inventories, basic research into new products and technologies, marketing and feasibility studies, and various experiments and demonstration projects by industry. Some of the initiatives have shown promise; others have not.

As part of its emphasis on promoting northern economic development opportunities, the Northern Alberta Development Council decided, in early 1984, to examine the current status and future potential for development of hardwoods in northern Alberta. The Council directed that a study and seminar review process be undertaken:

- to prepare a description and analysis of the resource and summarize potential opportunities, benefits and problems associated with the development of hardwoods in northern Alberta;

- to examine constraints to the development of the resource including physical, technical and financial considerations;

- to outline a series of recommendations or a potential strategy for the future development of the hardwood resource in northern Alberta.

As a first step in preparing the background research material, the Council sought the support of industry and relevant government departments. The Forest Products and Forest Industrial Development Research Program, administered by Alberta Energy & Natural Resources, Alberta Economic Development and the Alberta Research Council, contributed 50 per cent of the study's cost and a study steering committee was established representing government and the forest products industry.

The committee developed terms of reference for the study and selected the firm of Woodbridge, Reed and Associates Ltd. to carry out the project. The research project had four major components:

- a computer-assisted analysis of Energy & Natural Resources' Phase III inventory data for hardwoods

- an examination of pulp and paper, and wood products options to identify those most promising for northern Alberta

- a locational analysis identifying in a preliminary fashion where hardwood development projects could occur

- some elements of an overall approach to promote the development of the hardwood resource in northern Alberta.

A final report outlining the results and conclusions of the study was presented to the Northern Alberta Development Council in January of 1985. Some of the highlights of the study are:

- Alberta's estimated 17 million cubic metre hardwood reserve represents the largest remaining untapped wood supply in Canada. Development is not so much a question of "if" as of "when".

- Current use of hardwoods in northern Alberta is limited to one waferboard plant, about 25 small sawmills, experimental pulp production and a specialty lumber project.

- Three hardwood species grow in northern Alberta: trembling aspen, balsam poplar and white birch. Aspen is the most abundant. Both aspen and balsam poplar are prone to decay. For commercial development purposes, a relatively short time period or "window" exists.

- Decay in hardwood is very difficult to determine accurately but there is a relationship between decay and tree age. Many aspen stands may be either too old or decayed or, alternatively, too young for commercial use. Even taking into account the foregoing constraints, the size of the commercially usable resource in northern Alberta is substantial.

- A major part of the research was a market assessment of pulp and paper, and wood product options that might be feasible for northern Alberta hardwoods. Aspen/soft-

wood chemi-thermomechanical market pulp (CTMP), lightweight coated paper, aspen bleached kraft pulp (BKP) and specialty lumber were found to be most promising.

- Uncoated groundwood and freewood papers and waferboard/OSB (oriented strand board) are believed to have potential.

- Newsprint and tissues are technically possible but were not given a high ranking.

- A preliminary locational analysis, based largely upon the latest Alberta Energy & Natural Resources inventory identified eight northern areas where the resource might sustain commercial development. Footner Lake Forest, Peace River Forest at Manning, Grande Prairie Forest, and Slave Lake Forest at High Prairie may have sufficient volumes to support pulp options. Other sites which might sustain development include Slave Lake Forest (Mitsue), Lac La Biche Forest, Athabasca Forest (Fort McMurray) and Whitecourt.

- The study concluded that to promote early development of the resource, three initiatives should be considered:
  — A re-examination of aspen harvesting policy
  — The development of a promotional package geared to attracting investment to specific product market opportunities
  — An active resource marketing strategy with potential investors.

As a second part of the intensive review process, the Council organized a seminar for delegates from the forest industry, northern communities and government to discuss the report findings and hear the views of various knowledgeable speakers and panelists.

The "Seminar on Utilization of Hardwoods in Northern Alberta" was held on April 24 - 25, 1985, in Whitecourt. Some 100 Seminar delegates focused on the results and implications of the study, and delegates, in plenary and small group sessions, presented their views regarding prospects for future development of hardwoods in northern Alberta. Government speakers at the Seminar included the Minister of Energy & Natural Resources, the Chairman of the Forestry Caucus Committee, and senior officials from Alberta Economic Development, Energy & Natural Resources, the Canada Forest Service and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Industry speakers were from Pelican Spruce Mills at Edson, Blue Ridge Lumber and Procter and Gamble at Grande Prairie.

After reviewing the consultant study and seminar results, the Northern Alberta Development Council developed a set of recommendations for consideration by government and industry involving:

- A review of forest management policies as they relate to hardwood utilization

- An updating of resource inventory data for those areas in northern Alberta which show considerable promise and are accessible from existing communities and infrastructure

- Preparation of current directory of secondary wood manufacturing firms

- Participation of industry on the management committee of the Forest Product and Forest Industry Development Research Program

- Consideration of an incentive package for hardwood development, some components of which might include mill conversion assistance, infrastructure development assistance, transportation aid, and product and market development research

- Development of a promotional package concentrating on key product options, to include items such as the abundant secure hardwood supply; current resource data; information concerning infrastructure, northern communities available labor supply, energy costs and the positive investment climate.

A number of activities have been undertaken to date as a result of the Hardwood Seminar, in particular by the new Department of Forestry. The Northern Alberta Development Council is pleased with current progress on this important issue.

Printed copies of the research document and the seminar report are available from the Northern Development Branch in Peace River.

FORT McMURRAY OIL SANDS INFORMATION EXCHANGE

On June 19, 1985, the Northern Alberta Development Council and the City of Fort McMurray jointly sponsored an interchange meeting among the major oil companies active in the region and the various public and private institutions, organizations and groups who have an interest in keeping abreast of current developments.

The meeting was co-chaired by Norm Weiss, MLA, Chairman of the Northern Alberta Development Council, and Judi Dicks, Deputy Mayor, City of Fort McMurray.

Nine oil companies and the Alberta Oil Sands Technology and Research Authority accepted invitations to participate in the interchange. Each company presented an in-depth description of both present and possible future developments in the region. The companies

involved were Gulf Canada Resources Inc., Canstar Canada Petroleum Ltd., Paramount Resources Ltd., Canterra Energy Ltd., ESSO Resources Canada Ltd., Amoco Canada Petroleum Ltd., Union Oil Company, Canadian Superior Oil Ltd. and Syncrude Canada Ltd.

In addition there was an opportunity for questions of clarification following each presentation. After all the presentations were given, a general feedback session was held. The purpose of this discussion was to see if any common areas of concern or common suggestions emerged.

Community participation included the following Fort McMurray organizations: FCSS, Community Corrections, Mental Health Association, Regional Hospital, RCMP, Health Unit, Keyano College, Public and Separate School Districts, Indian Affairs, Youth Assessment Centre, Ministerial Association, Chamber of Commerce, BANAC, Businessmen's Association, City of Fort McMurray, Canada Employment Centre, Athabasca University, Manufacturers Association, Historical Society, AADAC, Interpretive Centre, United Way, Women's Crisis Centre and a number of others.

The morning concluded with a lunch hosted by the Northern Alberta Development Council.

The interchange was very successful and the Northern Alberta Development Council has received requests to sponsor similar events in Fort McMurray and other strongly development-impacted areas of the North.

A printed copy of the proceedings is available from the Northern Development Branch in Peace River.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN NORTHERN ALBERTA

During the year under review, the Northern Alberta Development Council commissioned a review of highly qualified manpower needs in northern Alberta. The survey was undertaken to provide up-to-date data for the awarding of bursaries under the Northern Alberta Development Council Student Bursary Program.

The survey identified current key occupational choices in northern Alberta and involved 270 employers, 19 provincial and federal government departments and five post-secondary institutions. The information was compiled and measured against factors such as current availability of manpower and major economic development scenarios.

As an off-shoot of this research, the Council compiled a very useful Guide to Career Opportunities in Northern Alberta. It noted northern Alberta is still a "land of opportunity" and there are plenty of places for hardworking, diligent people to set up shop and make a good living.

Three key points were outlined:

- Northern Alberta offers the greatest potential for economic and social growth in the Province. New agricultural land continues to open up; forestry is on the rebound; oil and gas activity maintains a high pace; and communities, institutions and secondary industries continue to develop.

- Northern Alberta is somewhat quieter today than in years past. The boom of the 70s has been replaced by steady, balanced growth; most of the services and infrastructure that rushed to be established to meet the growing demand are now in place.

- Northern Albertans need not go far in finding job and career oportunities. Although it may be necessary for northerners to leave home to complete their education and training in order to enter some professions, they do not have to stay away in order to build their careers. "The future is here at home."

The Guide provides an economic description of the various sub-regions of the North and outlines key career choices identified as likely to be in demand in the foreseeable future.

The highest need level for professions requiring a degree was mechanical engineers, physiotherapists and French teachers. Some other degree needs included:

- Engineers — all types
- Teachers — Industrial Arts, Math/Science, Business Education
- BSW
- Medical Doctors
- Occupational Therapists
- Nurses
- Dentists
- Commerce graduates.
- Speech Pathologists

For professions requiring a diploma, dental hygienists, power engineers, ECS teachers and nursing aides topped the list. Among other requirements are:

- Medical Lab Technicians
- Computer Technicians
- Dental Assistants
- Instrumentation Engineers
- Library Techs
- Occupational Health Technicians
- Secretaries
- Engineering design and drafting technicians
- RNAs

The Guide, available from the Northern Development Branch in Peace River, has been distributed to schools, post-secondary institutions and counsellors to aid career choices for the young people of Alberta.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN NORTHERN ALBERTA

In preparation for the Challenge North Conference in Fort McMurray in October of 1985, the Northern Alberta Development Council contracted a consulting team to help identify current economic development opportunities in northern Alberta. The overall purpose of the study was to examine from a regional perspective the economic circumstances in northern Alberta and the evident regional development opportunities. Eleven regional reports and a major overview report were produced.

The key objectives of the review were to identify local and regional aspirations, goals and priorities; to identify realistic economic development opportunities; and to build understanding among the citizens of northern Alberta as to opportunities which could be pursued.

The field research was undertaken from January to June, 1985, involving a comprehensive literature review, extensive personal interviews with key industry, community and government actors in each of the 11 regions, and a day-long workshop with business and community leaders in each region to review preliminary findings, and to provide additional input.

An active steering committee made up of industry, community and government representatives monitored the various stages of the project.

At the conclusion of the project 11 reports were produced outlining the economic development assets, goals, opportunities and constraints in each of the regions. A final report presented a summary of the regional reports and a general overview of the situation across the Northern Alberta Development Council area.

The research process generated a number of significant findings and the literature review, industry and government interviews and the regional workshops produced an impressive and valuable data base on the economic fabric of northern Alberta.

An important part of the summary report is an overview of the seven major economic sectors of agriculture, tourism, non-renewable resources, forestry, fish and wildlife, retail and servicing, and water resources. The sectors were analyzed using four topic areas: goals for each economic sector; assets by sector; opportunities for development within the various sectors; and the major constraints inhibiting the development of opportunities within each of the sectors.

A major conclusion of the study is that northern Alberta continues to be of significant economic importance to the province as a whole and to the rest of Canada. Its resource-based role will continue to expand in the foreseeable future and there are countless opportunities to develop many related retail and service-oriented businesses that will be required to maintain a healthy economy.

The report notes that, generally, the northern economy is rebounding from the recent recession and, indeed, some regions were not drastically affected at all. Overall, the recovery is being led by renewed conventional oil and gas and heavy oil activity. Northern residents see many opportunities in the service sector and in developing a stronger tourism industry in the North. The forest industry has potential for expansion. The agriculture industry is going through difficult times but is a vital sector of the northern economy. The traditional fish and wildlife sector faces some problems.

The study notes that there are continued requirements for infrastructure development, particularly roads, in northern Alberta. The resolution of concern related to water and its use by industry, will also be important areas to consider in the future.

Finally, it is concluded the people of the North are its most valuable asset. They see the North's potential and wish to make the North a better place for themselves and their children.

Report copies are available upon request from the Northern Development Branch in Peace River.

NORTHERN ALBERTA TODAY

One of the major objectives of the Northern Alberta Development Council is to promote positive development in northern Alberta. This involves extensive liaison with community groups, business leaders, government departments, prospective northerners, consultants and a variety of program and agency personnel delivering services in the North.

For years one of the major obstacles encountered when discussing northern conditions has been the lack of knowledge many people living outside of the region have concerning northern Alberta. As a lead-up to the Challenge North Conference, the Northern Alberta Development Council decided to prepare a high quality information profile to describe northern Alberta in a comprehensive but readable fashion.

Using extensive color photographs and a vivid lay-out, *Northern Alberta Today* has proven to be, based on the number of requests for copies, an outstanding success.

Organized on a descriptive sectoral basis, the publication outlines a number of interesting facts:

- Northern Alberta covers approximately 400 000 square kilometres or 60 per cent of the Alberta land mass.

- With the exception of a small portion of northeastern Alberta which is part of the Canadian Shield, northern Alberta is part of the Canadian Plains. Within these plains, great variety exists: flat-topped, high-hill regions; rolling upland areas; undulating and flat lowlands; wetlands and lake-covered regions.

- Approximately three-quarters of northern Alberta is covered by forest while 11 per cent has been cleared for agricultural purposes. Rivers, lakes and wetlands comprise the remaining area.

- 17 000 square kilometres of the North are covered in water.

- Northern winters are slightly colder than southern winters but northern summer temperatures are equivalent to the south.

- The northern growing season is somewhat shorter but more intense, due to longer summer days and sometimes lower elevations.

- The image of plentiful fish and wildlife resources must be tempered with the need for wildlife management.

- The northern population is approximately 10 per cent of the provincial total. In 1984 there were over 240,000 people living in northern Alberta.

- There were two cities, 24 towns, 16 villages, three counties, five municipal districts, 10 improvement districts, eight Metis settlements, and 26 Indian reserves in northern Alberta in 1984.

- The average annual growth rate in northern Alberta was 2.5 per cent from 1971 to 1976, and 4.1 per cent from 1976 to 1981.

- About one-third of the northern labor force is employed in the primary industries of agriculture, forestry, oil and gas, fishing and mining. Approximately another third is employed in the service industry tied to primary industries.

- The northern labor force participation rate was 69 per cent in 1984, compared to 72 per cent for southern Alberta and 65 per cent for Canada.

- The two main agricultural regions are the Athabasca - St. Paul region where mixed farming operations predominate, and the Peace Region where grain farming predominates.

- In 1981 the total improved acres were 9.8 million compared to 21.1 million in southern Alberta.

- The main cereal crops are barley, canola, wheat, rye and oats.

- Processing of honey, cheese, canola and alfalfa is important.

- With three-quarters of Alberta's forests in the North, sawmills play a valuable role.

- By the 1990s, northern Alberta may very well experience significant production increases if forests elsewhere in Canada continue to decline.

- Jackpine, lodgepole pine and white spruce are the principal commercial softwoods.

- The aspen hardwood reserves in northern Alberta exceed that of any province in Canada.

- Aspen's best commercial potential appears to be in pulp mix and for waferboard and oriented strandboard production.

- Northern commercial fishermen catch approximately three-quarters of the Alberta production and northern Alberta accounts for 80 per cent of Alberta's recreational fishing.

- There are 2,000 registered trappers in northern Alberta, approximately 80 per cent of all Alberta's trappers.

- Recreational hunting of moose, elk, deer, black bear and waterfowl is significant.

- Rainbow Lake has the largest conventional oil and natural gas field in Alberta.

- Fox Creek has the highest producing gas field in Canada and other large fields are found around Grande Prairie and north of Cold Lake.

- One of the newest and largest conventional oil fields is found in the north central region above Lesser Slave Lake.

- Oil sands underlie 60 000 square kilometres. The major fields are Athabasca, Cold Lake, Wabasca and Peace River, which together hold 200 billion cubic metres of bitumen.

- The only two world-scale commercial oil sands mining projects are at Fort McMurray.

- In Cold Lake, Peace River and Wabasca deposits there are over 30 in situ recovery plants in operation, many nearing commercial production.

- About one-quarter of Alberta's sulphur production comes from northern Alberta.

- Other potentially economic minerals include: peat moss, salt, iron ore, dimensional stone such as granite and heavy metals such as vanadium, nickel, titanium, zirconium and glass sands.

- The largest bituminous coal mine in Canada is located at Grande Cache.

- Northern Alberta retail and service trade resulted in $1.5 billion in revenues in 1982, eight per cent of the provincial total.

- Forest products manufacturing, including pulp and paper, employed more than 3,000 people, or half the northern manufacturing labor force in 1981.

- Agricultural processing accounted for 800 employees.

- Northern Alberta accounts for more than one-third of Alberta's construction.

- Northern Alberta accounts for approximately 10 per cent of the $2 billion annual provincial tourism receipts.

- Northern Alberta highways, railways and airways have replaced historic waterways as the means of commercial and personal transportation. There is a sophisticated and extensive transportation network through the North.

- Virtually all cities, towns and villages in northern Alberta have modern utilities such as piped and treated water, sewage disposal, natural gas, power and telephone.

- Distances and sparse populations remain a constraint to the development of complete services in the smaller, more remote communities.

- There are 28 active treatment hospitals with more than 2,300 acute and auxiliary care beds. Ten of these were built in the past five years.

- Northern Alberta contains modern schools, providing education to some 59,000 students.

- There are two of Alberta's four Alberta Vocational Centres, 20 Community Vocational Centres, four regional colleges, a university and two educational consortia in northern Alberta.

- There are approximately 18 designated historic sites in northern Alberta, including some of the province's oldest locations.

- There are more than 20 provincial parks, 100 roadside camping areas, 60 Alberta Forest Service camping areas, and 35 private or municipal camping areas in northern Alberta.

Northern Alberta Today concludes with an interesting section on northern innovation and the future. It notes that the variety and contrasts in the North point to tremendous opportunities but also continuing challenges to be faced. As part of the process of confronting the challenges, research and development activities are needed on a variety of social and economic fronts. A number of these currently underway are outlined.

INVENTORY OF INFRASTRUCTURE FOR NORTHERN COMMUNITIES, 1985

During the year, a third basic information package on northern Alberta was also produced. This involved an update of the widely used Inventory of Infrastructure for Northern Communities previously produced by the Council in 1977 and 1980. The report serves residents of northern Alberta and those with programming responsibilities in the North as an easy-to-reference compendium of current information on facilities, services and living conditions in northern communities. The Inventory contains an overview of the levels of community services across the North, detailed infrastructure summaries for 116 northern communities and summary tables of the Northern Alberta Development Council population and area.

A major section of the report outlines services and facilities on a community-by-community basis. Each separate community page begins with background data, municipal status and current population, and includes specific information on water, sewer, waste disposal, utilities, communications, transportation, health services, education, recreation, police protection, fire protection, local government and resident government offices. The facilities and services listed are those completed and in place as of September 15, 1985. Planned or intended projects were not included.

The overview outlines that, at the time, the North contained two cities, 25 towns, one new town, 14 villages and 40 hamlets of over 75 in population. The largest centres were Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Peace River, Whitecourt, Bonnyville, St. Paul, Slave Lake and Grande Cache. Eight-eight of the 116 communities had paved main access roads and only six had no all-weather road access. Fifty-five had scheduled bus service. Sixty-three were on rail transportation, but the only existing passenger rail service was betweeen Lac La Biche and Fort McMurray. Eleven northern communities had scheduled air service, although there were 25 paved and lighted airstrips, 22 with terminal buildings.

Electricity for residential purposes was available in every community, and 61 had access to piped natural gas. Eighty communities reported a full community water supply by piped distribution, while all of the remaining 36 had potable water, although respondents identified varying levels of servicing related to ease of access. A similar 75 communities had piped sewage disposal.

Local hospitals were located in 28 of the communities and 32 had resident ground ambulance services. Thirty-one communities supported 195 resident doctors; 23 communities had 67 practicing dentists. Health Units covered all of the area with 32 community offices. Grades 1-12 were offered in resident schools in 41 communities and only 21 communities had to rely on external busing for all grades.

All northern communities reported access to telephone service and most indicated ease of access to a provincial source of printed news. Twenty-nine have weekly newspapers; two daily. All can receive radio and a multitude of television services from cable to dishes are available; 15 communities still have no regular channel television. With regard to safety services, 34 have resident police detachments, and all but 38 maintain a resident fire brigade.

The report indicates three servicing levels: first were the typical full city services to be found in Grande Prairie and Fort McMurray and a number of the larger communities over 5,000, and second were some 40 northern communities between 1,000 and 5,000 in population possessing most, if not all, of the necessary services and facilities. The remaining 40 per cent of the communities revealed a level of servicing described as minimal but, in most cases, adequate, given the population base. With ongoing government funding support it appears most northern communities will continue to move up the scale of servicing. The Northern Alberta Development Council concluded the section by noting that over the last 15 years, the provincial commitment to assist established communities in the upgrading of services essential for basic health and safety was well on its way to completion.

Copies of the printed Inventory are available from the Northern Development Branch in Peace River.

CHALLENGE NORTH CONFERENCE

The Challenge North Conference, held October 2 - 4, 1985, in Fort McMurray, was the third in a series of major review conferences sponsored by the Northern Alberta Development Council. Previous "status report" conferences were the Opportunity North Conference in Peace River in November of 1975 and the Alberta North in the 80s Conference in Grande Prairie in November of 1980.

The Challenge North Conference was designed to focus on the economic prospects for northern Alberta and the theme of the Conference, "the future for economic growth in northern Alberta", was examined from the perspective of northern Alberta as a part of the larger global economy.

Prominent speakers and corporate and academic leaders from Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Hawaii and Nevada joined the more than 280 delegates from across northern Alberta in the Conference sessions.

The first day was devoted to looking at the larger society and the directions in which it is moving. Opening speakers included Norm Weiss, Chairman of the Northern Alberta Development Council and Chuck Knight, Mayor of Fort McMurray. Following presentation of a wide-screen audio-visual on Northern Alberta called "Opportunity and Challenge", John Kettle of Toronto provided a major address on "Challenging the Future: Economic & Social Trends".

The delegates were then taken on a tour.of the new Oil Sands Interpretive Centre and returned to hear Hon. Sinclair Stevens, Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion, review Canadian trends. The conclusion of the day saw the delegates witness the signing of a major new five-year Canada/Alberta Northern Development Agreement by Mr. Stevens and the Hon. Al "Boomer" Adair on behalf of the province.

Day-two featured a series of dynamic speakers outlining current and future challenges in enhancing northern economic development. The morning plenary sessions involved addresses on the major sectors of the northern economy. John Howard of the Independent Petroleum Association of Calgary discussed conventional oil and gas and Ralph Shepherd, the president of Syncrude, made a presentation on oil sands and heavy oil. Garrie Styan of Vancouver reviewed forestry and the address on northern agriculture was given by Art Guitard, past director-general of research for Agriculture Canada.

Hon. Larry Shaben, Chairman of Economic Planning Cabinet Committee, delivered the Provincial Address at the luncheon and then the Conference broke into six concurrent sessions. Session speakers were Lance Secretan from Caledon East on Entrepreneurship, Derek Mather of Vencap on Venture Capital, Chuck Gee of the University of Hawaii on Tourism, Ted Van Dyke from Creston on Economic Development in Small Communities, Don Detomasi of the University of Calgary on Community Economic Climate and Shelby Dill of Nevada on Prospecting for Diversification. The dinner speaker was W.O. Mitchell who delighted the audience with "Culture as a Resource".

The third day involved addresses by Hu Harries on the current business climate and a summary of the major Council study on northern economic opportunities by John Scott. A delegate reaction panel, open question period and conference summary by Hon. Al "Boomer" Adair concluded the conference. The delegate evaluation forms all showed that the Conference was well-organized, informative and very worthwhile in terms of useful ideas to be applied when delegates returned home.

Following the Conference, the Northern Alberta Development Council prepared a summary statement for use in its various follow-up activities and for advice to government. The summary noted the following key points:

- **Long-Term Stability**

Northern residents seek long-term economic stability for their region. They are looking for economic diversification; opportunities to encourage young people to stay in northern Alberta; and for the means to play a greater role in, and take advantage of, the development of resources.

- **Cautious Investment Climate**

The effects of the recent recession still exist. Many local businesspeople have a cautious approach toward investment in resource development-related opportunities. Lenders often exhibit very cautious attitudes to potential development.

- **Local Economic Development**

There is an increased interest in organized economic development programs in most communities and a lack of awareness of the best way to promote economic development at the community or regional level. Many communities require more expertise and assistance in order effectively to carry out an economic development program.

- **Agriculture**

The agricultural sector has a major role to play in northern economic development. Because of the serious cost/price squeeze, there is a need for increased agricultural diversification, improvements in farm productivity, and the continued and expanded use of "cost shelter programs" (for example fertilizer, fuel, drought assistance).

Specific agricultural processing opportunities for some grains, red meat, poultry and honey were identified in some regions.

There is an opportunity for further new land development in some regions.

Part-time employment off the farm will continue to play an important role as long as costs for farm development and farm operation remain at current levels.

Continued northern agricultural research is required at a significant funding level to address the long-term challenges and opportunities facing the industry.

- **Forestry**

The forest resource, traditionally a strong economic force in northern Alberta, offers potential for further expansion as prices and markets improve.

The hardwood (aspen) resource of northern Alberta is almost completely untapped. There are potential opportunities in some regions.

Just over half of the softwood (coniferous) resource in northern Alberta is committed to existing industry. There is potential for some development of the remaining resource and for increased production using smaller timber.

Further development of the forest industry, particularly the aspen resource, will likely require government assistance tailored to meet the requirements of the specific projects.

- **Non-renewable Resources**

The oil and gas industry plays a highly significant role in northern Alberta and will continue to drive the North's economy. The main components of the recent growth include: substantial conventional oil and gas exploration and development; expansion from experimental to commercial scale of a number of heavy oil plants; expansion of existing tar sands plants and examination of new oil sands plant investment potential; and enhanced recovery projects in existing fields.

- **Tourism**

Nearly all communities in northern Alberta saw some potential for increasing tourism activity in their regions. Most opportunities are local and small-scale and can be achieved with relatively small investments. Major tourism developments will require a partnership between government and business.

Significant opportunities exist for upgrading hospitality training, community attractiveness, and tourism awareness.

- **Fish and Wildlife**

The fish and wildlife resource in northern Alberta has an uncertain role to play in future economic development. There are many conflicting priorities between commercial and recreational-based activities; trapping can be maintained or increased but only if other development does not continue to encroach.

- **Retail, Service and Commercial**

  There are retail/commercial opportunities in virtually every northern community. Investment in these opportunities will likely come from local residents. Businesses must be sensitive to local situations.

  In communities near resource development, particularly non-renewable resources, there is substantial interest in improving the rate of local hiring and purchasing. Local hiring and purchasing can be enhanced by co-operation and communication between resource developers and local businesses.

  Continued work is required to expand the provincial government local purchasing and tendering policies so that the local firms can take advantage of opportunities in a competitive way.

- **Infrastructure**

  The North is an expanding, developing area. There continues to be a basic requirement for road construction and upgrading as a key "lever" for development. Several regions also need additional housing, municipal servicing and improved health care.

- **Water**

  Northern Alberta's water resources will play an increased role in supporting tourism, industrial and hydro-electric development and commercial fishing. Effective water management policies are required.

The Council also found that a number of common goals and themes emerged that cut across all economic sectors. These overall goals for economic development as expressed by northerners were to:

- Achieve moderate, sustained economic growth. The residents of northern Alberta would like to see growth but growth which is accompanied by a greater degree of long-term stability.

- Diversify the northern economy, seek stabilizing business to reduce the impact of "boom and bust" cycles which result from fluctuations in resource-oriented industries.

- Ensure that young people have the opportunities and options to remain in the North.

- Maximize the potential of communities and residents to take advantage of the development of regional resources. Find ways to enable the native population to participate in the economic life of the North more fully.

- Capitalize on the development of natural resources as a stimulus to growth and development.

- Sustain a climate for private sector profits and encourage local investment.

- Balance opportunities for growth throughout the entire northern region.

- Encourage the development of natural resources as markets, capital, labor and technology permit, considering the need for conservation and environmental protection.

- Promote the concept of "good corporate citizenship" particularly as it applies to local purchasing and to the training and employment of local people.

Finally, it was noted that northern Alberta offers many challenges:

- For communities, the challenge is to take the initiative and to become better organized.

- For business people, the challenge is to continue to identify and take advantage of opportunities.

- For the resource-based industries, the challenge is to develop and carry out effective local purchasing and local contracting policies, to hire and train local residents wherever possible, and to develop good communication networks with local residents.

- For the provincial government, the challenge is to encourage and promote development of all sectors of the northern economy and to provide increased assistance regarding economic development planning and organizational expertise at the local level.

- For the provincial and federal governments, the challenge is to continue developing infrastructure, transportation, research, and purchasing and tendering policies.

A printed copy of the Challenge North proceedings is available from the Northern Development Branch in Peace River.

CANADA/ALBERTA NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT

A new Canada/Alberta Northern Development Subsidiary Agreement was signed on October 2, 1985, in Fort McMurray by Hon. Sinclair Stevens, Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion and Al "Boomer" Adair, Minister Responsible for Northern Development. The new $40-million Agreement is the third in a series of five-year northern agreements between the federal and provincial governments. The new Agreement, however, has a number of unique features.

There are two fundamental strategies involved in the 1986-1991 Agreement. The first strategy involves a formal undertaking to better co-ordinate the respective efforts of both governments to avoid duplication and overlap. Tailoring of all existing programs will be examined, and making better use of existing resources is a key goal. It was also agreed that it would be essential to ensure full knowledge and participation by northern residents. The Agreement will, therefore, formally link various federal and provincial agencies with one another, and community liaison, planning and consultation will be undertaken using a one-window approach. Private sector and public sector advisory committees will aid in this process.

The second strategy of the Northern Development Subsidiary Agreement will be to offer assistance in three key areas: expanded diversity of economic development in the North; increased access to employment opportunities for northerners; and improvement of business/industry viability through the development of regional and community infrastructure. The assistance available will be in the form of financial contributions of an incremental or enrichment nature and both private and public sector applicants may apply. As the programs will be delivered with the clear object of encouraging both individual and community self-reliance, initiatives which are approved will be project-oriented and geared toward levering investment in the North.

There are three specific programs offering financial incentives to stimulate development in northern Alberta:

Program 1.0 Economic, Industrial and Business Development
($14 million over five years)

Sub-program 1.1 Regional and Economic Planning Assistance

A. Economic Expertise
B. Economic Research

Sub-program 1.2 **Business Development Assistance**

A. **Feasibility & Marketing Studies**
B. **New Business Establishment**
C. **Expansion of Existing Businesses**

Sub-program 1.3 Community-based Development Assistance

A. Remote Community Construction Force
B. Remote Community Commercial Ventures

Program 2.0 Human Resource Component
($11 million over five years)

Sub-program 2.1 Access to Training, Business & Life Skills

A. Vocational Training
B. Business Training & Advisory Services
C. Life Skills Development

Sub-program 2.2 Professional Enhancement

A. Hands-on Expertise
B. Recruitment of Professionals
C. Support for Professional & Technical Education

Sub-program 2.3 Business & Employment Support Mechanisms

A. Innovative Employment Projects

Program 3.0 Community and Regional Infrastructure
($12.7 million over 5 years)

Sub-program 3.1 Community Infrastructure

A. Infrastructure in Remote Communities
B. Communication Links/De-isolation
C. Site-Specific Infrastructure for Business in Remote Communities

Sub-program 3.2 Regional Infrastructure

A. Transportation Development
B. Infrastructure for New Resource Initiatives
C. Infrastructure for Regional Business Development

In addition there is an administrative component involving public information and evaluation.

Projects from all sectors across northern Alberta are eligible for funding but the ministers have placed a priority on the remote communities with high unemployment. The basic concept is one stimulation through "gap-filling" and "last-dollar financing". The Agreement, which opened for applications April 1, 1986, also has a number of qualifications with regard to types of activities, maximum contribution levels, etc.

Interested applicants can contact the Northern Development Agreement Administration Unit at Bag 900, Peace River, or 1-800-362-1353 (toll free).

STUDENT BURSARY PROGRAM

Created in 1974, the Northern Alberta Development Council Student Bursary Program is designed to encourage young people to obtain technical training or professional qualifications that are in high demand in northern areas of the province.

Students assisted through the program are obligated to work in northern Alberta, preferably in remote and isolated locations, for at least one year for each year of bursary support received.

The Bursary Progam is administered by the Students Finance Board. A selection committee, made up of four members of the Northern Alberta Development Council and one representative each from the Metis Association of Alberta, the Students Finance Board and Alberta Advanced Education and Manpower, is responsible for the establishment of guidelines and selection of candidates for bursary support.

On the basis of criteria including need, northern experience and special circumstances, the Selection Committee granted bursary assistance in 1985/86 to 153 applicants for a total of $597,030. The present bursary rates are up to $3,500 for single students and up to $6,000 per academic year for married students. Since the inception of the program, 1,572 bursaries have been awarded to students at a total expenditure of $4.9 million. Bursaries have been awarded in many areas including health care, educa-

tion, social services, agriculture, law business-related studies and engineering. Most of the returning graduates have remained in the North to contribute to the growing and diverse economy of the region

NEW COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS

In late 1985, through public advertisements in all northern newspapers, nominations were solicited from northern community groups and organizations for nominees to replace retiring public members of the Council.

In March, 1986, the Provincial Cabinet, through the Minister Responsible for Northern Development, the Hon. J.A. "Boomer" Adair, appointed three new members to the Northern Alberta Development Council. The membership for 1986/87 includes:

Norm Weiss, MLA, Fort McMurray, Chairman
Cec Jardine, Valleyview, Vice-Chairman
Mary Bennett, Elk Point
Gene Dextrase, High Level
Bob Elliott, MLA, Beaverlodge
Fred Gingerich, Athabasca
Bernie Hornby, Fox Creek
Vince Rice, Kinuso
Ted Sonntag, Hotchkiss
Evelyn Thunder, Atikameg

NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT BRANCH

NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT BRANCH

The purpose of the Northern Development Branch is to participate in developing and maintaining a socio-economic environment in northern Alberta which gives maximum opportunity for the inhabitants of the area to grow and prosper.

In achieving its purpose, the Branch provides all the administrative and technical support activities required by the Northern Alberta Development Council, and attempts to implement a flexible strategy of achieving specific socio-economic improvements in northern Alberta.

The Branch seeks to advance the development of human and natural resources in northern Alberta, as well as to aid in community development goals such as local decision-making and planning. It delves into a wide variety of issues as a result of briefs received by the Northern Alberta Development Council, e.g., agriculture, resource development, manpower training, community infrastructure, education, communications services, housing and transportation.

The **Research and Analysis Section** of the Branch provides the review and planning function for northern Alberta socio-economic improvements. Basic research is performed and background and position papers prepared in support of the Council in its role as an advisory body to government. Examples of major projects undertaken by the section on behalf of the Council during the fiscal year included: review papers on drainage and erosion, television services, group homes, family violence, community impact; community assessment studies in Faust, Valleyview, Beaverlodge, Wabasca, Lac La Biche and Elk Point; *Board Members Handbook;* and studies in the areas of manpower requirements, aspen utilization, regional economic development opportunities, northern inventory data and road development.

The purpose of the **Program Co-ordination Section** is to facilitate and assist in the co-ordination of activities of various line departments and agencies to achieve maximum opportunities for socio-economic development in northern Alberta. Within this context, the Section had a major responsibility to conduct negotiations with the federal government for renewal of the Canada/Alberta Northern Development Subsidiary Agreement. In the area of northern co-ordination efforts on behalf of the Council, extensive staff time was spent on interdepartmental liaison activities involving water and sewer delivery, remote community economic development, local government services, transportation needs, resource development plans, commercial trapping and fishing, electrification services, fire prevention, tourism development, social employment programs, vocational training, northern school divisions and planning for the Annual Conference of Northern Ministers.

A new **Agreement Administration Section** was created during the year under review. Its purpose is to define the detailed program criteria for implementation of the new Agreement over the 1986-91 time period, assess applications and undertake the necessary financial control procedures. Staffing for the new section is presently nearing completion.

The **Council Administration Section** provides technical and logistical support to the Chairman's office in Fort McMurray and to individual Council members for the monthly meetings. During 1985/86 six public meetings, four closed meetings, a conference, a seminar, a trip to Tumbler Ridge, B.C., and a number of special activities were organized. Detailed follow-up to the Student Bursary Program, assistance in the public nomination process and appointment of three new Council members were also undertaken. One hundred and eighty-nine briefs were received by Council during the fiscal year, and background documentation, interdepartmental liaison activities and draft responses were undertaken in each case by the Section staff.

A significant amount of the Branch's time during the year under review was related to preparation and follow-up to the Challenge North Conference held in Fort McMurray, and the Hardwood Utilization Seminar held in Whitecourt.

Other major Branch follow-up activities arising from the briefs and/or Council initiated requests involved: Eaglesham ambulance services, Wabasca health worker, Grouard concerns, Faust development, Canyon Creek brewery proposal, Northern Alberta Learners Network, Spirit River home care, School Food Services Program, Fort McKay adult literacy, Wabasca hospital, medical practitioners' isolation allowance, Glendon water supply, Cold Lake/Beaver River Water Management study, Kinuso water supply, inter-hospital transfers, Aboriginal Radio and Television Society, Settlement Sooniyaw, High Level Native Friendship Centre, Metis Settlement telephone services, Hutch Lake development, ID 23 representation, trapline resource officers, Fort Chipewyan skills training centre, land title liens in the Cold Lake region, Peace River library project, Falher malting plant, Fort McKay socio-economic plan, Zama health needs, Tourism Agreement, Blue Ridge housing lots, Fort Vermilion bicentennial, Lesser Slave Lake tourism, Boyle roads, Sandy Lake road, Conklin road, government privatization, EFRC extension, northern drought situation.

In its work as a co-ordinator and facilitator and, particularly, as a supplier of technical support to the Northern Alberta Development Council, the Branch continued to maintain a vital communications link between northern people and government.